

# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**June 19, 2009**

**For more information, contact:**  
Jennifer Trotter (505) 998-9744

## **NMMRA Employees Named as Lead Authors of a National Case Management Peer-reviewed Journal Article Highlighting Outcomes of a Six-state Project**

*NMMRA's Andrea (Andy) Romero, RHIT, CCS, CPC, also presents on the Case Management Assignment Protocol project at the Case Management Society of America's Annual Conference*

Albuquerque, NM—Two New Mexico Medical Review Association (NMMRA) employees – Andrea (Andy) Romero, RHIT, CCS, CPC, clinical data project manager, and Carlene Brown, MPH, CPHQ, project manager – were featured as lead authors of “Reducing Unnecessary Medicare Admissions: A Six-State Project,” published in the May/June 2009 issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Professional Case Management*, the official journal of the Case Management Society of America (CMSA). In addition, Romero was part of a panel discussion for a presentation on the Case Management Assignment Protocol (CMAP) at the CMSA Annual Conference on June 19.

The six-state CMAP special project which concluded last year was aimed at decreasing payment errors related to short-stay admissions to acute-care hospitals reimbursed under Medicare. The article presents project details and findings. Based on the decrease in unnecessary admissions and the relationship between the use of the protocol and correct admission status, the project demonstrated that the protocol was effective in ensuring that patients were placed in the appropriate status. In addition to reducing the Medicare payment error rate, NMMRA estimates that the percentage of unnecessary admissions decreased significantly during the time that the project was being conducted, from 26.4 percent to 12.4 percent, by addressing billing status only. The protocol does not determine the need for patient care.

According to the article, “The protocol standardizes the decision-making process at admission, thereby increasing the number of hospitalized patients assigned to the correct status of inpatient or observation.” As of March 2008, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) reported that Recovery Audit Contractors corrected \$37.8 million in underpayments to Medicare and \$992.7 million in overpayments, with 41 percent of the inpatient improper payments due to patients being assigned inappropriate status, such as being admitted rather than being placed in observation.

The CMAP project was funded by CMS and was led by NMMRA. It involved 16 hospitals in six states, including New Mexico. Working with its counterpart Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs) in Arizona,

—more—

Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington, NMMRA assisted them in recruiting and training hospitals in each state to adopt the case management protocol. Participating hospitals modified their procedures for assigning and documenting the proper setting of care needed when admitting a patient. Efforts were based on a previous pilot study conducted in Florida by that state's QIO which provided technical support in this project. Staff at the Florida QIO also co-authored the journal article.

NMMRA participated, with the Florida and Arizona QIOs, in a presentation on the three special projects utilizing the Case Management Assignment Protocol at the CMSA annual conference held this year in Phoenix. The event boasts more than 2,500 attendees. The CMAP presentation, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction (With the Case Management Protocol, You Can!)," was given on June 19 and addressed common misconceptions and myths about patient status, explained differences between observation and inpatient status and told how the case management protocol can improve a hospital's financial position.

NMMRA is a not-for-profit, physician-sponsored organization that is New Mexico's federally contracted Medicare Quality Improvement Organization and External Quality Review Organization for Medicaid. The organization works with health care providers, consumer and health care organizations, and state and federal agencies to improve the quality of health care in New Mexico. For more information about NMMRA, visit [www.nmmra.org](http://www.nmmra.org). To access the *Professional Case Management* article, go to [http://journals.lww.com/professionalcasemanagementjournal/Abstract/2009/05000/Reducing\\_Unnecessary\\_Medicare\\_Admissions\\_A.7.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/professionalcasemanagementjournal/Abstract/2009/05000/Reducing_Unnecessary_Medicare_Admissions_A.7.aspx).